

**TESTIMONY OF ERICA E.BROMLEY, MSW
Consultant, KADE Consulting
224 Burnt Hill Road, Hebron, CT 06040**

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**Regarding
Raised Bill 1058: AN ACT CONCERNING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM**

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee: My name is Erica Bromley and I am a consultant and owner of KADE Consulting. I currently consult for The CT Youth Services Association as their Juvenile Justice Liaison. I am also a Team Leader for the Children's Committee Kids Report Card, led by Senator Bartolomeo and Representative Urban. I have had the pleasure of specifically working on the Chronic Absenteeism indicator since the Report Card's inception.

I am speaking today in favor of RB 1058, An Act Concerning Chronic Absenteeism, which requires school districts to not only track chronic absenteeism, but requires the creation of Student Attendance Review Teams. I am in support of this bill.

Chronically Absent students who are not identified earlier are more likely to fail classes, drop out of school or become involved in the juvenile justice system. Additionally, it negatively affects other students in the classroom when chronically absent students return behind in their work. Minority students, those receiving free lunch and those with disabilities are also chronically absent at a much higher rate which mirrors the state's disparities apparent in our achievement gap data.

Intervention is key, and the earlier the better. By using the right data and identifying students, schools can address issues causing chronic absence at an earlier point in time. The first step is to look at school building data to track what individual students are struggling with attendance and then begin to address why it is happening. There is no standard answer to why and how children become chronically absent, but discovering those reasons is the only way to address those individualized issues.

This bill also calls for the creation of School Attendance Review Teams, a key component in addressing student needs. In some communities in CT, the use of School Attendance Review Team model has already seen much success. These Teams are comprised of representatives from the school system, both central office and individual school representatives, the Youth Service Bureau, community based mental health agencies, DCF, and others. Those pertinent to individual cases are also invited in on a case by case basis. These teams work together to solve attendance issues as well as behavior issues that often accompany chronic absence through the use of available resources and other creative intervention strategies. An individualized plan is put into place for each family which often includes assigning a case manager from either the

Youth Service Bureau, the school, or another community agency. Some school systems have also created new and updated policies to address school absence through the use of a continuum dependent on the number of absences, with each level of absences requiring a different intervention option, which have seen great success.

This model has helped create a more streamlined system of identification, communication, and provision of interventions. What has resulted is a comprehensive partnership based effort to support the needs of families whose children struggle with attendance in a way that addresses individual family needs. Case managers are able to support families in carrying out recommendations from the Team and are also able to work individually with the children in an effort to transition them back to full school attendance.

In closing, the work already being done at the local level in some communities in CT, as well as work at the State level, most notably with the Kids report Card, is an important beginning to addressing a disturbing trend with profound effects. The issue of Chronic Absenteeism is serious, but it is also one that can be addressed.

I applaud the effort of this Committee to continue to push this issue and am happy to answer any questions. Thank you.